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TO ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

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RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

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RHMFIS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE

RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE 5474

INFO RUEBKC/ATO ASIA IMMEDIATE 1812

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 010631

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TRAVEL WARNING - THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

¶1. The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of traveling to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo-Kinshasa). This notice replaces the Travel Warning dated October 30, 2008 to reflect changes in the security situation in North Kivu province and the surrounding area, as well as an increase in crime in Kinshasa.

¶2. On January 20, 2009, Rwandan government forces entered the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) at the invitation of the DRC government, to begin joint operations with the Congolese military and several demobilizing DRC rebel groups against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a political-military organization with links to the 1994 Rwandan genocide. At present, these joint operations are limited to North Kivu province but could be expanded to neighboring areas. In addition, FDLR units could relocate to areas further from the DRC-Rwandan border in order to escape the operation against them; the FDLR has also been known to take violent action against local communities when coming under military pressure. On October 29, 2008, all U.S. Government personnel who had been present in the city of Goma relocated temporarily to the Rwandan town of Gisenyi, directly across the border. U.S. Government personnel have since returned to Goma, and remain there despite the joint military operations described above, which are occurring outside the city.

¶3. Conditions within certain regions of the DRC, particularly in the east, remain dangerous and fighting could increase without any advance notice. Government soldiers, as well as rebel fighters expected to be demobilized as a result of ongoing peace processes, remain a security concern. These armed groups, located especially in North Kivu, South Kivu, Orientale, northern Katanga, and sporadically in Bas-Congo, are known to pillage, carjack, steal vehicles, kidnap, rape, kill, and carry out military or paramilitary operations in which civilians are indiscriminately targeted. Travelers are frequently detained and questioned by poorly disciplined

security forces at numerous roadblocks and border crossings throughout the country. Requests for bribes in such instances are extremely common, and security forces have occasionally injured or killed people refusing to pay.

¶4. Kinshasa has recently seen several crimes targeting American citizens, including armed robbery by groups posing as law enforcement. If the economy continues to worsen, crime is likely to increase in Kinshasa and elsewhere.

¶5. Public health concerns pose a hazard to U.S. citizen travelers due to outbreaks of deadly viruses and other diseases, which can occur without warning and often are not rapidly reported by local health authorities. In January, in the province of Western Kasai, an Ebola fever outbreak occurred in which 11 people died and more than 120 were exposed to the virus. Information on personal protection for international travelers, including children, can be found at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel>.

¶6. Enforcement of aviation safety standards in the DRC is uneven, with frequent incidents and accidents. The U.S. Embassy has prohibited official travel by U.S. government employees and contractors on all DRC-owned and operated commercial airlines due to safety and maintenance concerns. International flights on foreign-owned and operated carriers are not affected by this prohibition.

¶7. American citizens should avoid all public demonstrations and areas where crowds have gathered, exercise caution, and closely monitor local and international news from reliable sources. Radio Okapi broadcasts in French on 103.5 FM at 0700, 0800, 1200, and 1800 as well as flash updates throughout the day. English-language news can be found on BBC at 92.7 FM. In

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times of emergency, the Belgian Embassy operates a French-language radio broadcast system at FM 98.8. Changes in security conditions may occasionally restrict the travel of U.S. Mission personnel.

¶8. U.S. citizens who travel to or remain in the DRC despite this Travel Warning are strongly urged to register with the Embassy in Kinshasa or through the State Department's travel registration website at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 310 Avenue des Aviateurs; the Consular Section entrance is located on Avenue Dumi, opposite Saint Anne's Residence. The Embassy's telephone number, including for after-hours emergencies, is 243-81-225-5872; callers within the DRC should dial 081-225-5872. All Embassy telephone numbers are cellular phones as landlines are unreliable. The Embassy website is <http://kinshasa.usembassy.gov>.

¶9. U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Worldwide Caution, both located on the Department's Internet website at <http://travel.state.gov>. Up-to-date information on safety and security is available toll-free at 1-888-407-4747 from within the United States and Canada, or at regular toll rates at 1-202-501-4444 for callers outside the United States and Canada, from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

¶10. Minimize considered.
CLINTON